**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 4 of 4

# Jeremiah

### MEETING AIM

To explore how Jeremiah struggled with his calling and what this may mean for us.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 20

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

Jeremiah, like Elijah earlier in this series, is in this passage, wrestling with his calling from God. Unlike Elijah, Jeremiah does not have the privilege of encountering God in the gentle breeze, but rather here he articulates the internal wrestling which is occurring as he both cries out in anger and frustration and acknowledges the awesome authority of God.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments. Ask the group what they might want to be when they are older. Do they ever think about what God may have planned for them?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Invite the children to pair up with someone who is roughly the same size and explain that you are going to conduct a ‘thumb war’. Using their right hand, grip one another’s fingers. They should say the rhyme: “One, two, three, four, I declare a thumb war!” At the same time, they move their thumbs from side to side. Once the rhyme is complete, each player should try to use their thumb to pin down the thumb of the other for the count of three.

You can repeat for extra rounds if you so wish, or hold a knockout competition, to find an overall winner. Explain that during this session, we will be exploring the story of someone who was wrestling with themselves, and with God.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** printouts of Jeremiah 20:7-18 from an easy-to-read translation, such as the Good News Bible or the Contemporary English Version; felt-tip pens

Explain that today we are going to hear a story about Jeremiah, who was a prophet or messenger from God. God had chosen Jeremiah, before he was even born, to be his prophet and share his messages with the people. Jeremiah often struggled with this, pointing out his weaknesses and facing many problems along the way. Tell the group that one day, Jeremiah warned the people: God was very unhappy with the way they were living! Jeremiah said that punishment was coming. But rather than changing their ways, a priest arrested Jeremiah and had him put in the stocks, where he was punished and humiliated. After he was released, Jeremiah cried out to God.

Give out copies of the Bible passage and pens. Ask someone to read Jeremiah 20:7-18 and invite everyone else to follow along. As they read Jeremiah’s prayer, ask the children to draw emojis all over the passage, plotting Jeremiah’s feelings. You may need to read the passage more than once and allow time afterwards for the children to finish marking up their copy of the passage.

Once everyone has finished, invite the children to share how they think Elijah was feeling at the various points of his complaint.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* How does this story make you feel?
* Which parts of Jeremiah’s speech can you most relate to?
* What might you say to God in Jeremiah’s situation?
* What do you want to say to Jeremiah?
* How do you think God might respond to this prayer?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

Divide the children into two equally sized groups and have them form two lines facing one another with a gap between them. Ask for a volunteer, or choose a leader, to play the part of Jeremiah, and ask them to stand at one end of the two lines. Explain to the group that you are going to play out an activity called ‘Conscience alley’. The two lines of children represent Jeremiah’s conscience. One line of children represents all the positive thoughts and ideas, and the other represents all the negative thoughts and ideas.

On the signal to begin, Jeremiah steps forward, between the first two players. The player to his left should tell him something negative, reminding him of one of the challenges he is facing and why he is feeling so down. The player on his right will then remind him of something positive about who God is and what that may mean to Jeremiah.

As Jeremiah continues to walk through the two lines of children, those on either side take turns to chip in with a comment they want to make to him, according to what side they are on. When Jeremiah reaches the end, you could ask him to feed back any conclusion he may have come to, depending on which side he may have chosen to listen to!

As a follow-up to this, remind the group that no matter how low we are feeling about ourselves and what we may not be able to do, God is still God and his goodness remains. It’s OK for us to vent our frustrations at God, but that doesn’t change who he is.

Depending upon your children, you could repeat this activity with a twist. Ask for a volunteer who is prepared to walk through the alley. As they walk along, they should call out something negative that they are feeling, but this time someone from the line calls out a truth about God for that person to hold on to. Repeat with other volunteers as appropriate.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Gather the children together and lead them in this prayer, perhaps inviting the children to call out the response:

Father God, even when we’re struggling, you are there for us.

Even when we are questioning what is true, you are there for us.

Even when we can’t hear or see you, you are there for us.

Amen.

**BECKY MAY**

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